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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR CA/FPP; DS/ICI/CR; DS/CR/VF; DS/CR/CIL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CVIS](#) [SMIG](#) [KFRD](#) [ASEC](#) [AL](#)

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR DS AND DHS ASSISTANCE WITH ALBANIAN COMMANDO  
FRAUD RING

¶1. SUMMARY. Albanian Commando soldiers returning from military service in Iraq have applied at U.S. Embassy Tirana for tourist visas to visit friends and family in the United States. Many of these soldiers have presented letters of invitation from former U.S. Government contractors and military personnel whom they met in Iraq. Each of the applicants submitted documentation from a commanding officer stating that they are active duty military with a short period of authorized leave. None of the soldiers issued visas have returned to Albania. Post requests assistance from DS and DHS in combating this fraud. END SUMMARY.

¶2. In the last two years, the U.S. Embassy Tirana has had more than 20 Albanian Commando soldiers apply for tourist visas to the United States. Initially Post had concerns that visa refusals would provide public affairs issues during President Bush's visit to Albania in June 2007, as he was scheduled to meet with Albanian Commando soldiers returning from Iraq. But after the issuance of several visas, Post witnessed a surge in applications. Each of the applicants requested a brief visit to family or to U.S. contractors or military personnel they met while serving in Iraq. Eight applicants received visas in 2007 and 2008. One of the visas was physically cancelled before the applicant traveled, and another was turned around by CBP. Of the six applicants still remaining in the United States, three are now present illegally and the other three have applied for adjustment of status with USCIS. Based on their success in remaining or adjusting status, Post fears that it will continue to see increased numbers of Albanian Commando applicants seeking visas for reasons other than official training.

¶3. Corruption is prevalent in all sectors of Albanian society, and the consular section's recent experience has demonstrated that the Albanian military is no exception. Each of the applicants who were issued tourist visas and traveled were active duty military, but they all abandoned their military commitments within days to travel permanently to the United States. Information received at Post indicates that when the Albanian military does not strictly enforce attendance and AWOL policies, it often involves corruption. In some cases, an active duty soldier who goes AWOL might never face discipline because the commanding officer responsible for reporting the violation may just collect the absent soldier's salary rather than reporting the violation. As a result, the consular section now can place little faith in a military service commitment as a tie to Albania for purposes of overcoming section 214(b) in a tourist visa interview.

KBR Personnel

¶4. The majority of the Albanian Commando tourist visa applicants have applied for visas to visit one of two U.S. citizens who worked with Kellogg Brown and Root (KBR) in Iraq. Seven applicants have applied to visit U.S. citizen Matthew Woodford Vinson III, a KBR employee in Mosul, Iraq in 2006. Mr. Vinson has provided letters stating that he had met the applicants in Mosul when they served on his security team. Matthew Vinson listed his address as 721 Tucker Street, Apt. D, Raleigh, NC 27603, with a home phone of (919) 802-5616 and cell (919) 730-3028.

¶5. After several applicants were refused to visit Mr. Vinson, applicants began presenting invitations from Kendra Evers, another former KBR employee and U.S. citizen who is apparently from Washington state but currently working in Fort Bliss, Texas. Ms. Evers listed 509-884-3155 as her telephone number, and her address was listed on the applications as 1601 Eastmont Avenue, East Wenatchee, WA 98812.

#### The successful applicants

¶6. The following six individuals are all still present in the United States, although one has already successfully adjusted status and two others have pending applications with USCIS to extend or adjust their status. Three are present illegally and their whereabouts are unknown.

¶7. Mirjan Xhixha (DOB 17MAY1983) was issued a one entry, three month validity visa on May 17, 2007, annotated to visit Mr. Vinson in North Carolina. He entered the United States on May 25, 2007, and is apparently still present illegally.

¶8. Alfred Dani (DOB 19JUN1981) was first refused a tourist visa on August 15, 2007, to visit Mr. Vinson in North Carolina. He spoke no English and had no documentation. He returned for a second application on October 18, 2007, and was subsequently issued a tourist visa by another officer after he presented a letter which stated that he was still active duty in the Albanian military. He was issued a one entry, three month visa. He entered the United States on October 26, 2007, and currently has an I-539 application pending to extend or adjust status, although he failed to respond to USCIS' request for initial evidence on December 1, 2008.

¶9. Alban Kadhe (DOB 17APR1982) applied to visit Mr. Vinson on November 27, 2007. He received a one entry, three month visa with no annotation. He entered the United States on December 8, 2007, and is apparently still present illegally.

¶10. Gentjan Noka (DOB 31DEC1976) was issued a one entry, three month visa to visit Mr. Vinson on January 4, 2008. He stated that his wife was pregnant and expecting their first child in several months, so he would not stay more than a few weeks. The interviewing consular officer verified with the Albanian military that he was active duty. He presented invitation documents from Mr. Vinson and his Albanian commanding officer authorizing his leave. He entered the United States on January 26, 2008, and is apparently still present illegally.

¶11. Ervin Korra (DOB 15APR1986) (A 87-324-670) was issued a one entry, three month visa on August 27, 2007, to visit his aunt Farije Korra in Brooklyn. He claimed that he had one month of sick leave from the Albanian military. He entered the United States on September 9, 2007, and applied to adjust status with USCIS on April 23, 2008. In January 2008, Mr. Korra's sister Valbona Korra and her husband were refused visas to visit him. Additionally, another Commando named Blerim Xhaja has applied twice to visit members of the Korra family in Brooklyn. It is highly suspected that Ervin's marriage for adjustment of status to Christina Paone is fraudulent, as his other family members knew nothing of it when they applied for visas. Additionally, the mailing address used by Christina Paone with USCIS of 1710 77th Street, Apt. D4, Brooklyn, NY 11214, is actually that of Ibrahim Korra, Ervin's uncle.

¶12. Ajet Aruci (DOB 05MAR1982) was issued a multiple entry one year visa on January 16, 2008, to visit his friend Kendra Evers in Washington State for one month. He stated that he still had several years remaining with the Albanian military and had no immediate family in the United States. He entered the United States on February 18, 2008, and never departed. He applied to adjust to student status and his application was approved by USCIS in October 2008 and he is currently active in Sevis as attending the City University of New York.

¶13. Two additional Albanian Commando soldiers received visas but are no longer currently present in the United States. Altin Vladi (DOB 13JAN1982) was issued a one year visa on June 16, 2008, to visit Kendra Evers. He had not yet used the visa on November 26, 2008, when his wife Alsed Vladi (21JUL1986) applied to visit Ms.

Evers as well. Altin's still valid visa was cancelled by the interviewing Consular Officer, and his wife was refused, and therefore he was unable to travel to the United States.

¶14. Besnik Dine (DOB 02JAN1985) was issued a one year visa on March 20, 2007. He spent six months in the United States from April 6, 2007 to October 2, 2007. When he tried to re-enter the United States for a second time on October 18, 2007, he was placed by CBP into secondary at JFK airport, where he admitted to having worked without authorization during his previous stay. He was expeditiously removed and is no longer present in the United States.

¶15. Matthew Vinson and Kendra Evers assisted these soldiers in obtaining visas to work and live in the United States. It is not known what their motivation was for providing this assistance. Post now requests that DS and DHS investigate Mr. Vinson and Ms. Evers for their possible smuggling activities. Post also requests assistance in locating and removing the Albanian Commandos present illegally. Sending a message of enforcement to the Albanian military community could serve as a strong deterrent against future fraudulent NIV applications. Post therefore requeststthat this information be referred to the fraud ui(ts at DS, USCIS and ICE for assistance.

¶16. FFor any further information, please contact the RSO or the Consular Section at the U.S. Embassy in Tirana.

END

WITHERS